

Investigating the Relationship between Learning Disabilities and Behavioral Disorders

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Abstract

One of the most common disorders refers to learning disorders that seems to create a lifelong effect for individual which is beyond the reading, writing and math, and encompasses areas such as mental health, interpersonal relationships and behavioral manifestation. Therefore, this study was conducted to investigate the relationship between learning disabilities and behavioral disorders. To this end, 1807 elementary students of Karaj city were selected through random sampling, and completed the learning disorders scale of Ali Bahari Ghare Goz (2009). Also, according to the diagnostic scale of DSM-IV students' behavioral disorder were diagnosed. Chi-square test results showed that there is a significant relationship between learning disabilities and behavioral disorders such as hyperactivity, stubbornness and separation anxiety, and students with learning disabilities are more likely to have behavioral problems. Results of this study can be used by psychologists and school counselors.

Keywords: learning disabilities, behavioral disorders, mental health

Introduction

Students with especial disorders in learning are a branch of exceptional children who have recently been placed in the area of Exceptional Children (Narimani, 2008). Learning disorders, at first in 1960 are entered as newest subsidiary area in issue of Exceptional Children. Almost half of all children who were enrolled in the special education program, have learning disorders. However, this group of children doesn't have low intelligence compared to their classmates, and have natural appearance, growth, height and weight and play like other children, but in activities such as reading, writing, speaking and understanding mathematic have problems and in performing homework have serious problems (Ahmadi & Asadi, 1997).

In the Education Department of the United States, and Public Law 101-476 particular learning disorders are defined as "disorder in one or more of the basic psychological process which causing problems in understanding or using spoken or written language, and may appear as the imperfect ability to listen, think, speak, read, write, spell out of words or calculation of math". This term include modes such as perceptual disabilities, brain injury, mild brain dysfunctions, dyslexia, and developmental aphasia, but are not included children who primarily due to the disabilities of vision, hearing or mobility, or mental retardation or emotional disorders or economic, cultural or environmental disparities have learning disabilities (Education Department of United States, 1997, Gorman 2001, as cited in Narimani & Norani Degarmandergh, 2002).

Daily increasing numbers of people with learning disabilities, due to the development of definitions and development of diagnostic tools and recognition of learning disability, have attracted the focus of several research areas. Currently, prevalence rate of learning disabilities has been estimated between 1 to 30% of the school population (Psychological Society of America, 2000, Gresham, 2002) and is known as one of the most common disorders. It seems that this disorder has lifelong effect on individual which is beyond the reading, writing and math, and has effects on areas such as mental health, interpersonal relationships (Shahim, 2003), continuing education (Walkenshaw & Carlton, 1991), employment facilities and job- finding. The etiology of learning disorders can be effective in identifying, organizing, intervening and rehabilitating of this disorder. According to definition of America Psychological Association learning disability refers to: disorder in one or more of the basic psychological process that are involved in the process of understanding or using spoken or written language and causing defect in individuals' ability of listening, thinking, speaking, reading and writing, spelling or calculation of math. This definition doesn't included the children who their learning problems are due to disabilities of mobility, vision or hearing, mental retardation, emotional disturbance, environmental, cultural and economic poverty. Learning disability include conditions such as perceptual disabilities, brain injury, partial impairment of brain function, aphasia and dyslexia (Katz, Goldstein & Beers 2002, Weber 2009, Decker et al 2006, McQuillan 2010).

The term of behavioral disorders is commonly applied about most children with contrasts. This term is compiled almost about 85 years ago in psychology literature and culture without definition. Since then, teachers, doctors, psychology, nursing, and others who interested in children's emotional and behavioral problems, have used the term to describe their purpose. However, there isn't a single definition that is accepted by all (Seyf Neraghi & Naderi 2000).

Behavioral disorders are generally common and debilitating ones that can cause many problems for teachers and families and are associated with the social problems and relationships to a greater extent and children with disorders encounter more academic failures than children without the disorder. Also, in adolescence will be at risk of behavioral and social perturbations (Kashkouli, 2000). Consequences and effects of behavior problems create more preventive dilemma in child's individual and social life and even for the family and community in which he is located, and nearly effects on the every aspect of individual and social life. Hence, according to the importance of issue, the aim of this study is to investigate the relationship between learning disabilities and behavioral disorders.

Methodology

The research method is a descriptive correlation. To this end, 1807 elementary students from Karaj city were selected through random sampling, and completed the learning disorders scale of Ali Bahari Ghare Goz (2009) which was a screening scale for disorders of reading, writing and mathematics Also, according to the diagnostic scale of DSM-IV students' behavioral disorder including hyperactivity, stubbornness and separation anxiety, were detected.

Results

To analyze the data, multidimensional chi-square test was used, because the data are in nominal scale. At first, the frequency of each dependent variable was mentioned for the independent variable and then the significance of chi-square test is checked.

Chi-square test results indicated that the all levels of learning disabilities (math, reading, and writing) have a significant and positive relationship with all levels of behavioral disorders (hyperactivity, Stubbornness and separation anxiety).

Indicator		ADHD		t	Asymp.sig
		Don't have	have		
Mathematical disorder	have	1443	198	46.08	0.000
	Don't have	118	53		
		Stubbornness			
	Don't have	1419	216	17.95	0.000
	have	128	43		
		Separation Anxiety		17.33	0.000
	Don't have	1463	170		
	have	135	36		
		ADHD		51.33	0.000
Don't have	1466	205			
have	87	46			
Reading disorder		Stubbornness		9.41	0.002
	Don't have	1446	228		
	have	102	31		
		Separation Anxiety		20.02	0.000
	Don't have	1497	175		
	have	102	31		
		ADHD		69.94	0.000
	Don't have	1441	191		
	have	112	60		
Writing disorder		Stubbornness		25.66	0.000
	Don't have	1422	212		
	have	126	47		
		Separation Anxiety		25.94	0.000
	Don't have	1466	166		
	have	133	40		

Discussion and Conclusion

It is more than a century that behavioral scientists are learning about identifying and treating children with learning disorders. In 1950, psychologists and special education professionals paid attention to a certain group of students who are known to have learning disabilities. They had characteristics such as relatively normal appearance and normal intelligence and did not have specific problems in speech and recognition, but when they went to school, in process of learning, reading, writing, arithmetic and some concepts encountered to serious problem. Learning disabilities often are not identified before school entry because these disabilities appear in reading, spelling, writing and arithmetic. One of the things that children with particular learning disorders do about self includes comparing self with other classmates and reaching to a diagnostic about their personal capabilities and differences with others (Ismaili, Bayan Zadeh, 2006). These children who initially have enough confidence in their academic progress, then gradually understand that other children have better course status, over the next few months of first year of study at the school, they gradually see themselves different from others and perhaps feel inferiority or if the teacher and other classmates taunt them, they experience the hatred of lesson, school, teacher and also students. This group of children's parents, who are often unaware of their children's origins and causes of learning disabilities, make the problem more complex and by putting pressures on child, they create additional difficulties for him. Improper and degrading comparisons that are done by teachers, their parents and relatives between these children and their peers and classmates, gradually give rise to anxiety and mistrust in children and generally make problem internal and sometimes entirely incurable (Wallace and McLaughlin translated by Maneshi Tosi, 1997). Results of present study also showed that learning disorders have significant correlation with behavioral disorders.

Students with specific learning disorders who repeatedly experience academic failure are more vulnerable to behavioral and social – emotional problems. It is expected that these students show symptoms of distress and alienation from the world of school and adults after failure experiencing and incompetence feeling in several years of education (Rezaei, 2006). Wallace and McLaughlin (1994) and Gorman (2005) believe that some children cannot bear frequent failures and defeats that appear due to the learning disabilities. If their discouragement is not controlled, it leads to feelings of helpless, incompetent, frustration and eventually depression. In addition to depression, students with learning disabilities experience more inclusive anxiety, as compared to normal students. Also, students with learning disabilities have problem in formation of social relationships and adaptation too. These children often have difficulties in interacting with teachers and peers. Some students' social - emotional problems may be the result of lack of social understanding (Mercer, 2001). Results of present study also showed that learning disorders have significant correlation with behavioral disorders. Results of study are consistent with findings of Hosseyni (1994), Shahim (2003) and Most & Greenbank (2002). Conte and Andrews (1993) by performing a meta-analysis on 152 researches about social skills deficit in children with learning disabilities concluded that 75 percent of these children have deficient in social skills. They did not reported a significant difference among evaluation of parents, teachers, and peer and did not know weakness social skills cause or effect of learning disabilities. Children with learning disabilities are constantly exposed to the serious risk that they are not accepted by peers and show inappropriate social behavior. These children generally have less social skills than other children. In addition, it is reported that children with learning disorders have got behavioral problems in the home environment than normal children and this situation existed in three factors of behavior problems of endogenous, exogenous and hyperactivity. It seems that children with learning disabilities are normal in environment of school and do not have behavioral problems more than normal children, but they have shortcomings of social skills and in-

appropriate behavior in the house. It should be noted that the social behavior changes are influenced by environment. Researchers do not know social behaviors as a stable personality trait and assume it depends on the situation (Achenbach, McConaughy and Howell, 1987). Research literature also suggests that students with particular learning difficulties face to numerous emotional and affective problems (Archer, 2003) including social isolation and peer rejection (Kuhne & Wiener, 2000), loneliness (Sabornie, 1994, Margalit, 1998), depression and anxiety (Mishna, 1996, Martinez, 2006). It is perhaps for this reason that in many students with learning disabilities, a type of negative sense of self-worth forms due to the failures resulting from learning difficulties and lack of positive self-respect leads to weak self-esteem and self-concept in them and finally create a belief of "I can't " in them (Mercer, 2001). Therefore, due to successive failure in students with learning disabilities, often beliefs of lack of progress formed, which in its turn create problems that are beyond the basic disorder.

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